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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ALGIERS 001002

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PTER](#) [KPAL](#) [IS](#) [IZ](#) [AG](#)
SUBJECT: ALGERIA PROVIDES ITS REASONS FOR SUPPORTING
GOLDSTONE REPORT

REF: A) ALGIERS 0988 B) STATE 112828

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Classified By: Ambassador David D. Pearce for reasons 1.4 (b),(d).

Summary

11. (C) The Ambassador on November 8 reinforced ref A demarche on the Goldstone report with MFA Director General for Arab Affairs Bouzaher, urging Algerian support to help ensure the follow-up process does not further complicate efforts to move Palestinians and Israelis to negotiated peace. Bouzaher responded that his government would not magnify the issue in the media or otherwise, but it had supported the report because it was important for Israel to understand it simply could not expect to act as it had in Gaza with impunity. Bouzaher agreed that PA President Abbas was the best hope for Palestinian moderation and a peaceful settlement, but it was no surprise he wanted to step down. Abu Mazen had nothing to show for his efforts; Israeli settlements continued to eat away at Arab communities, especially in Jerusalem. The Ambassador noted the need to support the PA and urged quick disbursement of the remaining tranche of Algeria's USD 60-million annual contribution. Bouzaher replied that Algeria would continue to support the PA, but its assistance was on hold for the time being, partly to press for Palestinian reconciliation, partly due to concerns about Algerian aid reaching its intended recipients. On Iraq, the Ambassador urged the return of an Algerian ambassador to Baghdad. Bouzaher said the Algerian government did have an ambassador resident in Amman, even though Baghdad had declined to send anything more than a charge d'affaires to Algiers. There were also continuing concerns about lack of progress in the investigation into the killing several years ago of Algerian diplomats in Baghdad. End summary.

Goldstone

12. (C) The Ambassador, accompanied by pol/econ chief, met November 8 with MFA Director General for Arab Affairs Abdelhamid Bouzaher to reinforce U.S. concerns about the Goldstone report (refs A and B). He said it was important that the follow-up to this resolution not make more difficult the job of moving Palestinians and Israelis to a negotiated solution. We have worked with Algeria recently in multinational fora, e.g., in Geneva, with some success; we hope that will continue in the coming period. It was essential to support the PA and get the parties back to talks, not do things that will make that tougher. It was important to ensure the PA had institutions in place for the day when there would be a state. In that regard, we hope, as Assistant Secretary Feltman said on his recent visit, that the GOA would consider disbursing the remaining tranche of its annual USD 60-million commitment as soon as possible.

13. (C) Bouzaher said the purpose of the Goldstone Report was to make sure that Israeli actions in Gaza not go unpunished and not be repeated. Israel had acted brutally and disproportionately. It had committed atrocities, war crimes and crimes against humanity. The whole world was now speaking to this through the Goldstone Report. That document should exert moral pressure on the government of Israel and make it realize it could not act with impunity, even under U.S. protection. Bouzaher thought Israeli actions in Gaza should be referred to the International Criminal Court.

14. (C) Bouzaher noted, however, that Algeria would not do anything beyond supporting the report. It would not seek to magnify the issue in the media. He was skeptical that referring the report to the UN Security Council would be useful. But Algeria supported the process to give a voice to what he called "international justice and the international conscience." Gazans must not feel they are left to themselves. Algeria was a friend of the U.S., but the Gaza affair went too far. The international community could not let something like the Gaza war happen again. The Ambassador pointed out that the U.S. supported accountability, but the Goldstone Report was not balanced; its focus had been heavily on Israel, not Hamas. Bouzaher interjected that the Algerian delegate in Geneva had disavowed the sections of the report dealing with Hamas. This was not the position of the Algerian government; it supported the entire report, including the sections dealing with Hamas.

Peace Process

15. (C) Bouzaher termed Abu Mazen the best "guarantee" of the moderate tendency in Palestinian politics. He was committed

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to a continuation of the process toward a negotiated solution begun at Oslo. But for Abu Mazen to contain Hamas, there had to be progress and the Roadmap had to be adhered to. Hamas had risen to its current level because Abu Mazen had nothing to show for his approach. It was no wonder that he wanted to resign. Bouzaher thought it was still possible to stop Hamas -- but only if the situation on the ground truly improved. The problem was that Israeli settlements continue to expand, motivated by an "ideological, biblical" way of thinking. Arab East Jerusalem had been surrounded by settlements and cut off from the rest of the Palestinians. Israeli settlements continued to slowly but inexorably "nibble away" at the small Arab communities remaining in East Jerusalem, which were subject to constant attacks. Sharon's provocative visit to the Haram al-Sharif in 2000 had sparked the Intifada. Nine years later, the Israelis had turned the area into something like a museum open to the public. How could we bring Abu Mazen back to the negotiating table under these conditions?

16. (C) On support for the PA, Bouzaher said that his government had already released half of its annual support commitment to the PA. Releasing the rest would depend in part on the process of reunification of the Palestinian factions. The GOA was also concerned that divisions among Palestinians were preventing assistance from reaching some of its intended recipients.

Iraq

17. (C) The Ambassador turned to Iraq, urging that Algeria consider returning its ambassador to Baghdad. Algeria had significant weight and influence in the Arab world, and such a move would be an important and positive signal of Iraq's reintegration into the region as it headed toward national elections.

18. (C) Bouzaher replied that Algeria had always supported

Iraq's sovereignty. It now supported a reconciliation accord including all Iraqis. That was the best way to counter Iranian influence. On the bilateral front, however, Bouzaher characterized Iraqi Prime Minister al-Maliki's behavior as unacceptable. His government had never made an effort to improve relations by following up on the kidnapping and murder of two Algerian diplomats. Algeria continued to maintain diplomatic relations at the level of Ambassador, although its Ambassador was resident in Amman. Baghdad, on the other hand, had never seen fit to send more than a charge d'affaires to Algiers.

Comment:

¶9. (C) Bouzaher took the point on Goldstone follow-up not complicating the peace process and made clear the GOA would not be officially trumpeting the issue. At the same time, he was vehement about the need for the international community to signal to Israel that it could not simply act with complete impunity, even with U.S. support. He was unsurprised by Abu Mazen's evident desire to withdraw from the scene, noting that his moderation had produced nothing and that this had been politically fatal for him and his party, Fatah. Hamas had reaped the benefit by default. A/S Feltman and Ambassador both have now asked for the remaining PA assistance tranche to be disbursed. But Bouzaher's comments indicate that, while the GOA will still keep the checks coming, they evidently are going slow at the moment in hopes they can somehow leverage the money to promote Palestinian reconciliation. On Iraq, we keep raising the return of a resident Algerian ambassador, but the GOA is peeved at what they see as the Maliki government's lack of seriousness in investigating the death of their diplomats and their diplomatic brush-off by sending only a charge d'affaires to Algiers. End comment.

¶10. (U) Tripoli minimize considered.

PEARCE